

ONE OF OUR OWN

(Part one of a three part story, by Col Paul R. Kopczynski, PA Wing Historian)

Many of you have probably heard the name, Col Phillip Neuweiler, in some old documents and certainly in copies of reprints of the old Pa Wing Newsletters that have been printed over the last year which depict the early days of Civil Air Patrol in Pennsylvania. Many of you have not had the privilege of knowing him as I and a few of the old hands that remain in the Wing have. He was a remarkable man and one not easily forgotten. This article has been written to provide you with some insight into one of the most dominant and forward looking Wing Commanders Pennsylvania ever had, a true visionary.

Phillip F. Neuweiler a long time prominent civic leader, sportsman and Brewmeister, was the President of the Neuweiler brewing Company founded by his grand father Louis F. Neuweiler in 1878. In the beginning it was known as the Germania Brewery. In 1911 when the massive brewery was erected at Front & Gordon Streets, it became known as the L. F. Neuweiler & Sons Brewery and in later years the Neuweiler Brewing Corporation. They were known for their famous Neuweiler Cream Ale which flowed quite freely at CAP functions and a case of the brew was always presented as a gift to visiting dignitaries. This is the only reason I think a lot of them always came. In fact, it was always a door prize including the famous serving trays from the brewery at banquets and meetings that were held around the Wing. The brewery itself went on until 1969 long after bankruptcy proceedings were originally filed. Today, the Neuweiler Brewery no longer exists but there is a claim that a third generation Neuweiler is producing beer under the Neuweiler name in the Reading area. The only remaining vestige that Neuweiler ever existed in the brewing business in Allentown was a pub in one of the hotels in Allentown owned by the brewery, called The Colonel Neuweiler Pub named after Col Neuweiler. The Neuweiler Brewery did quite well for many years which allowed the Colonel to direct his efforts to build a great Wing. There were bars and hotels owned by the Neuweilers throughout the region that served their beer exclusively and were very successful with this set up until the IRS enacted laws regarding company entertainment expenses which prevented breweries from owning such establishments. Something however, that still goes on in the United Kingdom. Besides being involved in the brewery business, Phillip Neuweiler was greatly influenced and interested in aviation. He was a pioneer pilot and airplane owner and was quite influential and a dominant factor in the development in the Allentown (ABE) airport, now known as the Lehigh Valley International Airport. He was influential in the development of airports and of aviation not only in the Allentown area, but throughout the state of Pennsylvania and nationally. Colonel Neuweiler was a member of the Lehigh - Northampton Authority since its inception and the Pennsylvania Aviation Commission for many years. When the airport Authority was formed in 1943 he was its first Treasurer, a post he held until 1969. *(Story to be continued in April issue of the Keystone Wing Slip.)*

(Special thanks to Richard Ludwig, Herb Cahalen and Tom Jensen for filling in the "blanks".)

ONE OF OUR OWN, continued

His interest in aviation benefited his enthusiasm for field sports and hunting and had flown on extensive hunting expeditions as far away as the Rocky Mountains, Canada, the Bering Strait and Arctic Circle. He shot a polar bear in 1958 that was declared the largest ever bagged in the American Arctic. This bear was mounted and displayed at many sportsmen's shows and expositions throughout the Lehigh Valley. It has been said the polar bear is now resides at Muhlenberg College. Colonel Neuweiler served on the Boards of the Lehigh Agricultural Society and was and trustee of Sacred Heart Hospital. Colonel Neuweilers enthusiasm for flying and the development of aviation in the area will be long remembered. This now leads us to his Civil Air Patrol career. After WWII broke out, Col .Neuweiler was a principal factor in the formation of the CAP not only locally, but throughout the State and on a National level. He was appointed Training Officer in 1943 during the formative years of the 31st Pennsylvania Wing. During this period he formed the first Drill team in the Pennsylvania Wing, a "Wing" drill team. This has been documented on film which has been converted from celluloid to DVD and is available at Wing Headquarters. It was shown at the last Wing Conference. Colonel Neuweiler was appointed Wing Commander on 16 August 1945 and served until 31 March 1946 and again, from 9 August 1947 until 21 march 1970, the longest tenure of any Wing Commander in Civil Air Patrol history. Something that we will never see again. During the span of his career, Colonel Neuweiler accomplished some notable achievements. For example; he was designated as the first Search Pilot in the Wing, flew the first mercy mission and went on to fly 386 mercy flights in addition to many "as we then called them SAR Missions (also for training flights) and Redcaps (actual SAR authorized missions)". He was the first to land on an open highway during some of the CD Missions and paved the way for such flights during Civil Defense training Exercises which were conducted as part of the training program in the 50's and 60's. The first ground to air message pickup, etc and the list goes on and on. In the process, Colonel Neuweiler at last count in 1966, accumulated over 5000 flying hours since starting flying in 1929. He has the distinction of being the Pennsylvania Wings First Ranger and formed the first Ranger Team. And also formed the first Pennsylvania Wing Squadron, Squadron 801. You guessed it; they held their meetings in a property owned by the brewery three blocks north of the main plant. Something else that the Rangers should know and be thankful for, is the fact that Colonel Neuweiler owned a pheasant farm on one of the three adjoining properties in the surrounding area one of which was the Pine Swamp area that is now site of the Hawk Mountain Ranger Training Area. The fact that he owned the property which was one farm broken down into parcels, was to be sold at foreclosure as part of the aforementioned bankruptcy. This made it possible for a few CAP individuals who formed Rangers Incorporated, to purchase the Pine Swamp Road property, at auction and eventually donating the property to National Headquarters in 1983 thus assuming custody of the property and having it remain a CAP entity. I'll bet a lot of your rangers didn't know that! This facility is a big part of his legacy and should so be preserved. He designed a badge for the Ranger program which many are unaware which consisted of a skull and cross bones with a cross on top of the skull. Needless to say, it didn't go too far and had a limited distribution. Having probably the only remaining article, I still do not understand the significance, only he did and we will never know unless someone out there comes forward with an explanation.

(Part two of a three part story, by Col Paul R. Kopczynski, PA Wing Historian)